

Buddhist Sermons 2006

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(Buddhist Sermon 2006 New Year Day 1)

My sermon to you today is titled -

Listen To the Good Word, Bear It in Mind and Live According To What It Says

This in Pali reads as:

Suṇātha dhāretha carātha dhamme

Dear listeners. I am speaking to you on the first of January 2006. Today we commence the sixth year of the 21st century. So let me begin wishing all our Sri Lankans living in this land, in the south and in the north, in the east and in the west a truly blissful new year 2006, with safety and security for every one,

irrespective of all caste creed differences. This is truly in the spirit of the cultural heritage which I personally have inherited and which I cherish now for eighty-five years of my life.

I want to tell you that as a child I learnt it in my own home, reading the Pali *sukhino vā khemino hontu sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā*: May all beings live happily, with comfort and security for everyone, everywhere. This did not come to me via the cassettes that are being widely used today. Each one playing them for their own personal happiness and well being. The Buddhist monks of our temples whom I lovingly associated from the very early years of my life did directly chant these in our presence and explain to us their meaning. So these ideas grew within us, in our heads and hearts, organically integrated. I make no secret that I speak to you as a Buddhist.

Buddhism has been in this country of Sri Lanka for well over two thousand three hundred years. Its first point of entry into this country was Mihintale, a suburban country town not far from Anuradhapura, the capital city of the then reigning monarch Devanāmpiya Tissa. Even at this time, we are told that Sri Lanka had a fairly developed urban culture, with a generous and magnanimous king on the throne who enjoyed life, together with all his people.

On festival days he would order his people to relax, and enjoy themselves with activities like water sports and he would himself go on his customary royal deer-hunt of a pre-Buddhist Sri Lanka. He had his harem too. But we infer, consisting of ladies who were cultured and diligent at the same time. Forget not Anula, his sister-in-law, one of the foremost among the elite, a diligent lady of surprisingly great wisdom and judgement, viewing her from all angles.

The arrival of Buddhism in this country took place about three centuries before the Christian era. The Sri Lankan chronicle Mahavamsa which was compiled about the fifth or sixth centuries A. D., in its reference to the arrival of the Bodhi tree in Sri Lanka about the same time of the arrival of Buddhism, via

Jambukola Paṭṭana, the port town of the Jaffna region, speaks of a Brahmin by the name of Tivakka who very magnanimously participated in the religious activities connected with its arrival in the island and at its planting in Anuradhapura. Latterly even a new sapling of the Bodhi tree was dispatched by the king for planting in that region where Tivakka was obviously an eminent person of some recognition, presumably non-Sinhala and non-Buddhist.

These precisely honest, impartial references in the Mahavamsa are definite indications of the very smooth process of cultural integration and assimilation, of sharing and caring, that was possible in those pre-warring days of multi-ethnic and multi-religious amicable peaceful co-existence in this land. But today, misinformed experts from many sides, both native and foreign, ascribe to the Mahavamsa many mischievous statements which are non-existent and not traceable within it. This kind of politically inclined rubble rousing is totally unworthy of academics and equally well of journalists of any standing. This is dangerously misleading and highly inflammable.

As I indicated at the very outset, I pick up the word *dhamma* [or Sanskrit *dharma*] to speak to you about this morning because of its tremendous power of maintaining law and order in our midst and upholding justice. It is a panacea for all social evils and human injustices which humans, through their disregard for it, generate here on earth. *Dhamma* does not carry with it a heaven-sent solution for ills of man but an honest attempt to understand man by himself. Our *dhamma* is a message given to the world by the Buddha as a human. Born in India, his passport would invariably have registered him as an Indian. There being no pre-Buddha Buddhism in India at the time, it would be equally true that he could, religion wise, have been registered a Hindu. But it should be known by now, by both the academic and non-academic world, that the fanciful old-world myth once generated in India that the Buddha was born a Hindu, lived a Hindu and died a Hindu has long been exploded.

Dhamma is virtually the rule of law, with a consensus among people for law and order. The Indian system of law of Manu, for instance, would insist that a fair and just law should be the same for both men and women in the world, since man and woman share a common responsibility in the production of children. That, we consider, was remarkable sanity and equally commendable wisdom. Something to be remembered today when the world speaks of equality and rights of women.

*Prajananārthaṃ striyaḥ sṛṣṭāḥ santānārthañ ca māṇavāḥ
tasmāt sādharmaṇaḥ dharmāḥ saha patnyā udīritaḥ*

Manu V. 96

Buddhist *dhamma* operates as a rewarding determinant of good living for humans, both for this life and for the life beyond death. If any ethnic or religious group, or any group professing a political ideology of their own, can reach a consensus among themselves with regard to a globally acceptable rule of law, i.e. a universally applicable *dharma*, this alone would make the world of humans a place worth living in. This is the essence of the Buddhist teaching which is expressed as: 'He who lives in accordance with the *dhamma*, lives blissfully in this world and the next'.

Dhamma-cārī sukhaṃ seti asmiṃ loke paramhi ca

Dhp. v. 169

That is also why the Buddhists are called upon, as an essential requirement, to be guided by the *dhamma* in their lives: *dhamma-saraṇā* and by none other: *anañña-saraṇā* at DN. II.100. It is also to be lived perfectly well and not half-heartedly:

Dhammaṃ care sucaritaṃ na naṃ duccharitaṃ care.

Dhp. v. 169

Buddhism insists that no one shall, in their own self interest, override *dhamma: yo dhammaṃ nātivattati* [DN. III.182]. Success and glory in life spring forth from a chosen adherence to *dhamma*. What deflects people from adherence to *dhamma* or living in accordance with it are the basic human weaknesses of strong likes [*chanda*] and dislikes [*dosa*]. These human failings are the outcome of the over-inflated sense of selfhood or notion of I and mine, individually or collectively. Thus world-wide massacres, prompted by religious and ethnic identities continue to take place all around us, both between different groups and within groups themselves.

This mockery or tragicomedy, or by whatever name one calls it, which we now witness day after day, hour after hour, even here in Sri Lanka, is totally unworthy of humans. To say the least, it is an expression of inexplicable lunacy, kindled and fanned by diverse types of group leadership in the world, both ethnic and religious. We do want to believe that Sri Lankans of all ethnic groups have enough good sense to see through these. But obsession has irreparably overtaken them. They seem to be determined to fight like Kilkenny cats till the last of the species is gone off the scene.

These days when histories of countries and people are deliberately not taught to our young for various reasons, or when histories are re-written by interested parties for many personally profitable reasons, it is important that people are made aware as to who they are, clearly indicating their identity, where they come from, and what they stand for in the midst of our human community in this single unit of Sri Lanka. They certainly are different to home-cultured mushrooms of today.

History distortion, whether of people or of their religions and cultures, is a big gamble, indulged in today, even by international bodies. This is undeniably leading globally to diverse neo-phobias, challenges, disputes and unwarranted rivalries among mankind. In the wake of such thinking, led by world-wide

gangsterism of evil geniuses, come devastating viruses like self-determination, ethnic cleansing and head-hunting, and economic independence etc.

Sri Lanka too, very unfortunately, has got dumped into this pot of 'the witches brew' for very obvious reasons, now for nearly a century or more. The lead in this direction was given by power-seeking politicians on all sides, whose identity is not totally unknown. They deserve to be installed in a portrait gallery, for whatever they deserve. Some even have betrayed their own flock in the hunt. The tragedy of this in our country has been the gullibility, not only of the man in the street, but of every man and woman in our land, in the town and the village, including the elite as well as the less elite. Each one believing, in his or her own way, that he or she is benefiting in a big way thereby. It is tragic at the same time that contributing to this equally well has been our own social and intellectual leadership, both monks as well as laymen.

The major item on the agenda in this national crisis of Sri Lanka today is what appears to be the head-on collision between two ethnic groups living in the land. One seems to be not only keen but also fully arming themselves to fight the other major community which is nearly 70% of the native population. Where now is the United Nations and who upholds the concepts of Human Rights. They do certainly need a correction of their vision and need to be well informed. What stupid global howlers is it to say that Sri Lanka is fighting Hindu separatists. These big lies as well as their originators have to be nailed to the counter.

It is no secret that the challenge is against the Sinhala Buddhists of this country. Let us face it square. But this is the true demographic position at the moment. While large scale manoeuvres are going on, even with international assistance, there is no belying this position. As far back as the fifth century A. D., when the Chinese traveller monk Fa Hsien visited this country, the country was known to him as Sinhala and he rendered it into Chinese with three characters Seng Chia Lo, i.e. Sin-ha- la. He also translated it into Chinese with three other

characters Shih tse kuo which meant the Country of the Lion Offspring People. This is proof enough for the true identity of Sri Lanka from a very ancient period, essentially as the land of the Sinhala people. Those who rose to be political leaders of this country, from wherever they emerged, were more than ignorant of these facts. From where could they have ever learnt these? Not from Oxford or Cambridge. It had to be from their parents, if they ever knew their origins.

We have already indicated above that the arrival of Buddhism in this country took place about three centuries before the Christian era. At the state functions organized by the Sri Lankan king Devanam Piya Tissa, eminent non-Sinhala non-Buddhists who were resident in the island like Brahmin Tivakka seem to have participated.

These precisely honest, impartial references in the Mahavamsa are definite indications of the very smooth process of cultural integration and assimilation, of sharing and caring, that was possible in those pre-warring days of multi-ethnic and multi-religious amicable peaceful co-existence in this land. But today, misinformed experts from many sides, both native and foreign, ascribe to the Mahavamsa many mischievous statements which are non-existent and not traceable within it. This kind of politically inclined rubble rousing is totally unworthy of academics and equally well of journalists of any standing. This is dangerously misleading and highly inflammable.

But this preponderance of the Sinhalas in the population of this country did not preclude the presence of smaller groups of non-Sinhala people being in the island. The arrival of Buddhism in this country took place about three centuries before the Christian era. The Sri Lankan chronicle Mahavamsa which was compiled about the fifth or sixth centuries A. D., in its reference to the arrival of the Bodhi tree in Sri Lanka about the same time of the arrival of Buddhism, via the Jaffna region, speaks of a Brahmin by the name of Tivakka who very magnanimously participated in the religious activities connected with this event.

Latterly even a new sapling of the Bodhi tree was dispatched by the king for planting in that region where Tivakka was obviously a person of some recognition. These references are definite indications of the very smooth process of cultural integration and assimilation that was possible in those pre-warring days of multi-ethnic and multi-religious peaceful co-existence, But today, misinformed experts from many sides ascribe to the Mahavamsa many statements which are not traceable within it.



(Buddhist Serman 2006 New Year Day 2)

Suṇātha dhāretha carātha dhamme

Dear listeners. I speak to you today on the first of January 2006. We commence the sixth year of the 21st century. So I wish to make it a look back on our past, and a look forward too, to the future, scanning the horizon before us. Buddhism has now been in this country for well over two thousand years. Its first entry point into this country was Mihintale, a suburban country town not far from Anuradhapura, the capital city of the then reigning monarch Devanāṃpiya Tissa. Even at this time, we are told that Sri Lanka had a fairly developed urban culture, with a generous and magnanimous king who enjoyed life, together with his people. On festival days he would order his people to relax, and enjoy themselves with activities like water sports and he would himself go on the royal hunt. He had his harem too. But we infer, consisting of ladies who were cultured and diligent at the same time. Forget not Anula, one of the foremost among them, viewing her from all angles.

These days when histories of countries and people are deliberately not taught to our young for various reasons, or when histories are re-written by interested parties for many more other profitable reasons, it is important that

people are made aware as to who they are, clearly indicating their identity, where they come from, and what they stand for in the midst of our human community in this single unit of Sri Lanka. History distortion, whether of people or of their religions and cultures, is a big gamble, indulged in today, even by international bodies. This is undeniably leading globally to challenge, dispute and unwarranted rivalries among mankind. In the wake of such thinking, led by world-wide evil geniuses, come devastating viruses like self-determination, ethnic head-hunting, etc.

Sri Lanka too, has got dumped in this pot of 'the witches brew' for very obvious reasons, now for nearly a century or more. The lead in this was given by power-seeking politicians on all sides. Some even betrayed their own flock in the hunt. The tragedy of this in our country has been the gullibility, not only of the man in the street, but of every man and woman in our land, in the town and the village, including elite as well as less elite. Each one believing, in his or her own way, that he or she is benefiting in a big way. Contributing to this equally well has been our own social and intellectual leadership, both monks as well as laymen.

The major item on the agenda in this national crisis of Sri Lanka today is what appears to be the head-on collision between two ethnic groups living in the land. One seems to be not only keen but also fully arming themselves to fight the other major community which is nearly 70% of the native population. It is no secret that they are the Sinhala Buddhists of this country. This is the true demographic position at the moment. Even with international assistance, while large scale maneuvers are going on, there is no belying this position. As far back as the fifth century A.D. when the Chinese traveler monk Fa Hsien visited this country, the country was known to him as Sinhala and he rendered it into Chinese with three characters Seng Chia Lo. He also translated it into Chinese with three other characters Shih tse kuo which meant the Country of the Lion Offspring People. This is proof enough for the true identity of Sri Lanka from a very ancient period as essentially the land of the Sinhala people.

But this did not preclude presence of smaller groups of non-Sinhala people in the island. The arrival of Buddhism in this country took place about three centuries before the Christian era. The Sri Lankan chronicle Mahavamsa which was also compiled about the fifth sixth centuries A.D., in its reference to the arrival of the Bodhi tree in Sri Lanka about the same time, via the Jaffna region, speaks of a Brahmin by the name of Tivakka who very magnanimously participated in the religious activities connected with this event. Latterly even a new sapling of the Bodhi tree was dispatched by the king for planting in that region where Tivakka was obviously a person of some recognition. These references are definite indications of the very smooth process of cultural integration and assimilation that was possible in those pre-warring days of multi-ethnic and multi-religious co-existence,



(Buddhist Serman 2006 New Year Day 3)

Belief and Acceptance - *Saddhā* & *Sīla* **in the life of a Buddhist**

Professor Dhammavihari Thera

To what extent are these two English words Belief and Acceptance permissible within a framework of Buddhist thinking? We take as their equivalents in Pali the words *saddhā* and *sīla*. The former is the **believing in** the Buddha as a trustworthy teacher and his system [*Tathāgate saddham paṭilabhati*. DN.I.63; MN.I.179]. This is what is implied in the taking of *tisaraṇa*, i.e. *Buddham Dhammam Saṅgham saraṇam gacchāmi*, on our own choice, up to a third time. Further to this, opting to undertake the observance of *sīla* implies the **acceptance of** [*samādiyāmi*] the way of religious life recommended by the Buddha. We know there can be many who would argue for and against this interpretation. They

have said, let them say what they say.

In the new year 2006, we personally wish to re-examine some items of our Buddhist thinking which we have inherited over the decades, nay centuries, from our religious clergy and our learned laymen, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, of this country and elsewhere. Our search and our examination is going to be primarily based on the reliably authentic texts of the Theravada tradition, namely the Nikaya texts like the Dīgha, Majjhima and Samyutta. These Nikaya texts belong to what is presently known as the Sutta Piṭaka in the currently known *piṭaka* division. In ancient times, they came under Dhamma in the twofold category known as the **Dhamma** and the **Vinaya** as in Buddha's own statement *Yo vo mayā Ānanda Dhammo ca Vinayo ca desito paññatto so vo mamaccayena satthā* [DN. II. 154]. Even at the first post-*paribbāna* recital of Buddhist teachings known as the First Buddhist Council or *Pañca-satī-saṅgīti*, it is reliably learnt that only two divisions of Buddhist teachings known as Dhamma and Vinaya were gone through [See Vin. II. 284 ff.].

The reality of this two-fold Dhamma Vinaya division referred to above is traceable to the genesis of these two out of a historical need: i. They are the new message about the life of man in the world and the way out of its ills. ii. A legalized system for regulating the lives of those who joined the Buddha as his full time disciples in pursuit of the goal he proclaimed for their liberation. As is clearly evident, after an intense and trying search [to which the Buddha himself refers as *kicchena me adhigataṃ*] for a solution to the human ills of existence and *Samṣāric* continuance, the Buddha discovered an answer.

He found out for himself the true nature of the human predicament or life in the world, that it is continuously full of unsatisfactory situations. This is mainly due to the inability of the human to cope with and fit himself into the ceaselessly and rapidly changing nature of the world in which he is placed. The sum total of this maladjustment of man to the world is what the Buddha refers to as *dukkha*.

This is what man makes out of his existence in the world. The world of man is lodged in the *dukkha* he creates: *dukkhe loko paṭiṭṭhito*. This world is also said to be within the fathom-sized body of the human [*Api cā' haṃ āvuso imasmim byāmamatte kalebare saññimhi samanake lokañ ca paññāpemi lokasamudayañ ca lokanirodhañ ca lokanirodhagāminiñ ca paṭipadañ ca*. AN.II.50].

The primary quest of the Buddha aspirant or Bodhisatta was to find a termination or *nirodha* to this process of *dukkhha* [*dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ*]. His enlightenment was the outcome of this earnest search [... *anuttaraṃ santivarapadaṃ pariyesamāno* at MN. I.163]. Therefore in his teachings, he continuously keeps on telling us that his message to the world all the time has been about *dukkha* and its termination in *nirodha* [*Pubbe c'āhaṃ bhikkhave etarahi ca dukkhañ c'eva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ*. MN.I.140]. Therefore we are compelled to admit that this is the core and kernel of his teaching to mankind. This is his dhamma, the teaching for liberation from *saṃsāric* ills or *sabba-dukkha-nissaraṇa*. It is referred to as being wholesome at the beginning, in the middle and at the end [... *dhammaṃ deseti ādi-kalyāṇaṃ majjhe kalyāṇaṃ pariyosāna-kalyāṇaṃ* at MN.II.133]. This is aimed at the final attainment of Nibbāna, severally described as *nibbāna-sacchikaraṇatthāya*, *anupādā parinibbānatthaṃ* etc.

When the Buddha preaches this doctrine to the world and a layman hears it, he develops a trust and gains a confidence in the preacher and in what he preaches [... *so taṃ dhammaṃ sutvā tathāgate saddhaṃ paṭilabhati*. DN.I. 63; MN. I. 179]. It is this rapport which gets an average layman of the world into the threshold of Buddhism. He seeks to follow the new Master and live according to his teaching. He calls upon the Master to treat him as one of his followers. Here is Brahmin Jānuṣsoṇi in the Bhayabherava Sutta calling upon the Buddha to accept him as a disciple: *Esā' haṃ bhavantaṃ Gotamaṃ saraṇam gacchāmi dhammañca bhikkhusaṅghaṃ ca*. *Upāsakaṃ maṃ bhavaṃ Gotamo dhāretu ajjatagge pāṇ'upetaṃ saraṇaṃ gatan'ti*. MN. I. 24.

To us, this statement covers both territories of belief and acceptance. They are necessarily integrated. Belief and trust implied in the *tisaraṇa + gamana* naturally leads to one's living in accordance with the accepted creed, i.e. choosing to be an *upāsaka* [or even going further and being a *pabbajita*]. The two, *saraṇa + gamana* and *sīla + samādāna* are indispensable stages of religious stabilization in one's chosen creed. Without this initial entry, without this involvement, one remains a complete outsider. These two together confirm the basic membership in the newly accepted religious order. They must be jointly and indispensably present at the same time.

This necessarily involves two parties, the believer and the believed in. This in a way almost resembles a wedlock, a happy marriage, carrying with it the basic virtues of devotion and conjugal fidelity or honesty of their union. Once brought together by choice and with wholehearted acceptance, no alluring charm outside this union, in any other group or person, can be allowed to entice and pull apart, tearing apart one or the other of the two brought together. This is the sacred union of a religion and its adherents who follow it. Believed to be less fortunate people of the world are not to be marooned in today's typhoons and tidal waves of religious conversions, which are quite often correctly stigmatized as unethical. We would even say vulgar. These are rapidly sweeping over many less affluent lands and many less enlightened people of the world.

Therefore Buddhism looks upon the dwindling or the total disappearance of these two basic virtues of belief and acceptance, named here as being *assaddho* and *dussīlo* as specific signs of the decadence and disintegration of the religiousness of a Buddhist. For the same reason of this decline, such an individual is decisively and relentlessly stigmatized as being an outcaste Buddhist or *upāsaka caṇḍāla*. He is a *pariah* in the Buddhist community. He is referred to as: *upāsaka-patikiṭṭho*. This is commented on with the word *upāsaka-pacchimako*, i.e. as one occupying the last place as a Buddhist [AA.III.302]. He is also called a stigma on the whole community or *upāsaka-malaṃ* [See AN.III.206

for further details]. Today we need very badly a Buddhist Bureau of Standards to be able to identify such sub-standard items in our midst. We lament that these wonderful bits of Buddhist teachings are not adequately made known to those who need to know them.

A religion is essentially the cultural heritage of a people which has fashioned them to their current position of socio-cultural embellishment. With most of the so-reckoned world religions, this has gone on for very nearly two millennia. World religions are clearly diverse in character and historians and the more modern sociologists of the world have endeavored to identify the role of religions in fashioning nations of the world into their present positions of aspirations and global claims, one wanting to claim as its adherents a greater part of the world than the other. One has to admit, like it or not, that this is the curse which the so-called world religions, with their expansionist and world dominating ambitions are bringing upon mankind today. More recently, even global wars are becoming imminent on this basis of religious, ethnic and political ideologies, their identities and their differences. No better word for this than religious fanaticism.

Closely allied to these two religious concepts of *saddhā* [belief] and *sīla* [acceptance] which we have examined so far, relating them to the disastrous consequences of their absence in the life of a Buddhist, are three more items listed in the Anguttara Nikaya [at AN.III. 206] which make a Buddhist disciple an unworthy person within his fold: *Pañcahi bhikkhave dhammehi samannāgato upāsako upāsaka-caṇḍālo ca hoti upāsaka-malañ ca upāsaka-patikiṭṭho ca*. In the tumultuous and turbulent Buddhist atmosphere which has been prevailing in Sri Lanka in the last few decades, we deem it would be more than rewarding making an honest analysis and examination as to the why and the wherefore of these as forewarnings in the history of Buddhism. They pertain to the beliefs and practices, according to the text, of a lay disciple which run contrary to his own creed. Today, we would make bold to say, they pertain not only to the lay community, but would equally well apply to many of our Buddhist monks as well.

The first in this list of three additional failings [i.e. No. 3 in the original list] is an *upāsaka* being *kotūhala-maṅgaliko hoti*. This means that a Buddhist, superstitiously and groundlessly believes in gaining good luck and success from some source somewhere, in some inexplicable mysterious way and this, in a way which is not logically provable or verifiable. This is an attitude in life which we would say in English 'Dulls the edge of husbandry'. The Buddhists would, or indeed should, relentlessly reject this as a state of stupefaction. This belongs only to a subnormal world of mere belief. A religion like Buddhism, with a system of rational and logical thinking, cannot in any way accommodate such items.

The second is *maṅgalaṃ pacceṭi no kammaṃ*. This is a two-sided human degradation of a Buddhist with a dual deterioration. On the one hand, in *maṅgalaṃ pacceṭi*, there is the unfounded belief in super natural mysterious forces being at work in the world, bringing good luck to the humans in an inexplicable way, according to the supplications they and their mediators make. On the other, in *no kammaṃ*, there is the reduction to well below minimum, of the reliance on the energetic and diligent application of one's human resources, i.e. the fruitfulness of human endeavor or *kamma*. Such an individual who fails in both these areas has to be well outside the arena of Buddhist living and comes to be stigmatized as being an *upāsaka-patikiṭṭho*. One of whom we would say 'He is well outside the Buddhist fold '.

Finally, in this list of causes which lead to religious degradation comes the failing in the Buddhist to look out for persons or objects worthy of veneration outside his own religious creed and to make offerings thereunto.: *ito ca bahiddhā dakkhiṇeyyaṃ gavesati tattha ca pubbakāraṃ karoti* [AN.III. 206]. It is of paramount importance to Buddhists world over, specially those interested in the Theravada tradition, as against the Mahayana of the Far Eastern countries and the Vajrayana of Tibetan tradition, that the veneration of objects besides the *Tisaraṇa*, i.e. the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha within their own creed, is something unacceptable and untenable. Such veneration is usually associated

with the expectation of favours and rewards, for this life or life beyond this, from the persons prayed to and venerated. Some of these may be mysteriously elevated historically living human personalities and others legendarily generated via religious myths and traditions. A true and genuine Buddhist who is liberation oriented, has to leave these severely alone.

It is our lament that Sri Lankan Buddhists today know very little about this area of their religion. It is in their own interest, we guess, not to know and live in blissful ignorance. On many instances, Buddhist monks of very high repute are known to sponsor such beliefs and practices. Some of them even claim having direct communication with such sources. It is not for us to endeavor to prove or disprove them. We only indicate what we discover in Buddhist texts regarding such indulgences. It is for those who have ears to hear to listen and take in what is of benefit to them.

Let us now finally take a look at the different facets of Buddhism in practice that are seen to be prevalent in Sri Lanka today. It is customary at all religious functions in Buddhist temples to commence all religious ceremonies with the giving and taking of *tisaraṇa + pansil*. It is equally true at state functions which endeavor to display a Buddhist character. In Buddhist homes, it is invariably so. We have endeavored above to make clear what we believe to be the main role these need to play in the lives of the followers. The first is the declaration of one's unwavering faith or degree of belief in the founder of the creed, namely the Buddha.

In the taking of *tisaraṇa*, the laity are expected to make this declaration three times, with *dutiyam'pi* and *tatiyam'pi*, necessarily affirming their adherence to the creed. That is why the takers of *tisaraṇa + pansil* are required, as a prelude, to say aloud three times the *namas + kāraya* which is their adoration of the Buddha. This is no more than *namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa*. By saying this aloud the takers should have the unique virtues of the Buddha vividly

brought before them. In the Thai tradition, the leader of the lay group would initiate this by calling upon the congregation to do this. The leader would say this aloud in Pali: *Handa mayaṃ bhagavato pubbhāga-namakkāraṃ karomase.*

It is very sad indeed that here in Sri Lanka, quite often we hardly hear a single word coming out of the lips of the congregation. It is, as if it were, that the monk has to, with his grand eloquence, deliver the *tisaraṇa* + *pansil* breaking the death-like silence of the audience. But at times, we do hear monks reminding the audience at this point the fact that they have now taken upon themselves the *tisaraṇa* by saying *tisaraṇa-gamaṇaṃ sampuṇṇaṃ*. Very few in the audience would know that they are confirming this when they say in reply *āma bhante*. It is time indeed that we make our audiences understand what they do so that they get charged and consequently enriched with the spirit of their religion.

Moving over to the *pañcasīla* after the *tisaraṇa*, the lay community must become seriously aware that at this stage they are seriously pledging to accept the religious discipline of their creed. It has to be more or less a daily promise that we would regulate our life-style in conformity with those five basic precepts of harmonious inter-personal relationship. It has to be clear to any one of any faith who views it with detachment that the scope and content of *pañcasīla* is no more and no less than that. Through the *tisaraṇa*, the Buddhist has already acquired his distinct Buddhistness. The Universal Monarch or *Cakkavatti* King of Buddhist legendary origin delivers this same theme of *pañcasīla* to all subordinate rulers who come to him seeking counsel as a guide to the governance of their particular kingdoms. This he does, essentially based on an awareness of the universal applicability of *pañcasīla*.

In a world of multi-ethnic multi-religious co-existence, the theme of *pañcasīla* does not require subordination to any religious authority, human or divine. The theme, in spite of its age of two and half millennia, is self-explanatory and self-justifiable. That is why in the world today, people of many cultures and many

territorial origins are seeing the worth of the regulatory precepts of the *pañcasīla*. Respect for all forms of life, of man and bird and beast is its first item under *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*. All mankind globally, irrespective of religious differences, is now beginning to uphold the need for this for peace on earth and goodwill among men.

It is the people who live on this earth here who can establish peace on earth. It is not by others from outside, through remote control. The world has witnessed enough wars to realize the failure of this system for more than two millennia. People today, on denominational basis, seem to claim sanctions and commands from higher powers elsewhere to wipe out and destroy other groups of people. Never before has absurdity of human thinking reached such heights under the shadow of a cloud of divine authority. In whose hands is the security of the world. Peace on earth and goodwill among men has to be forged here on earth on the anvil of logical and meaningful human thinking.

It is people with sanity and sobriety, sitting well outside religious edifices with no vested interests to guard, to preach and proselytize, who could harness this brand of universal humaneness and magnanimity for the survival of man on earth as a first priority. This certainly has to be for something more than a mere guarantee of a place in the kingdom of God after one's death. Nothing inhuman which violates the rights of man on earth could in any way be a stepping stone to reap divine harvests in heavenly abodes.



On the Way to Nirvana - Where do We Begin?

Professor Dhammavihari Thera

The Buddha in his first sermon of the Dhammacakkappavattana made known

to the world not only the possibility of terminating the whirl of *dukkha* in which the humans are caught up [i.e. *nirodha*], but also clearly indicated the way or *magga* leading to it. In the list of four noble truths or *cattāri-ariya-saccāni*, this is the last one called the *magga sacca*. In the very logical Buddhist thinking, everyone needs to know our identity, who we are and where we stand within this life frame. Literally, our assets and our liabilities. This knowledge about ourselves or self awareness is a basic must.

How many Buddhists in this country know about the basic differences between the Buddhists and the non-Buddhists, here or in any part of the part of the world. Do our preachers of the *dhamma* in the temples or the personalities in the currently more powerful media know this adequately and make it known clearly to the others? Do they ever dare come out with it? Religions of the world fall into two clear categories on this. Religions which belong to the Judeo-Christian group uphold the creationist theory that the world and everything therein was created by an all knowing, all powerful, and all merciful God, with man as the centre of interest. Protection and punishment of man was therefore exclusively in his hands. He was the judge of what is right and wrong. None of his creation shall offend God or disobey his commands. The right of punishment was his: *vindicta mihi*.

On the other hand, the Buddhists of Sri Lanka whom we know more closely, today are of diverse brands and therefore seem to think so strangely, differing wildly from what we have known so far as the early Theravada Buddhism derived from India. Men, women and even Buddhist monks who go out for all manner of studies to foreign countries like China, Korea and Japan, for studies which are not necessarily Buddhist, seem to import back into this country for propagation here fanciful colourful patterns of prayer and worship, sometimes even weird. They seem to grip the minds of our fashion-mongering Sri Lankans, men and women who with their aberrant modes of thinking are courageous enough to ascribe some of these to our Indian Buddha, Śakyamuni Gotama himself. They

are lamentably lacking in a sense of historical stratification, of being able to separate the early from the late, like the Pali Nikaya texts from the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka sūtra written in Sanskrit, hundreds of years later. It is best that one leaves some of these like our local Lotus Sūtra worshippers or Namo myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo's to test their own sanity and wisdom.

In the face of these newly emerging prayer-cult religious groups, imported from foreign countries, both east and west, announcing new messiahs, it is incumbent on the religious leadership of this country, when and wherever they are capable of doing so, to make known to their followers this basic position of early Buddhism. The first lessons to be learnt and made known to those interested in early historical Buddhism, whether in Sri Lanka or elsewhere include, we believe, as its basic instructions its anthropocentric vision. This stands in marked contrast to the theo-centricism or God-orientation of most of the other world religions which come in the wake of Buddhism., centuries later.

The clear and candid statement in the Raṭṭhapāla Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya [at MN.II.68] describes the world in which we humans live as being without the security and protection of any external power, divine or whatever else one wishes to imagine it to be. The text reads as *a + ttāṇo loko*. This means that we humans in this world have no external source of power besides ourselves whom we can pray to in submission, and seek grace and merciful protection. We have to secure it ourselves: *attā hi attano nātho kahi nāto paro siyā*. Dh. vv. 160 & 380]. We are vested with our own responsibility for the guidance and correction of our behaviour. Likewise, punishment for our errors and misdeeds is also not determined and directed by any external authority: *an + abhissaro*. This immediately tells us of the nature of religious culture in Buddhism, that the humans of the world who have come into existence through a process of evolution have to handle this process themselves, for greater efficiency or otherwise of the product called life.

It is this regulatory process of life which is called *dhamma* in Buddhism. Its Sanskrit equivalent is *dharma*. At the very outset we indicated to you that the Buddha very summarily gave the message of his *dhamma* to the world in his first sermon, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta [traceable at SN.V.420ff. and Vinaya I.10f.]. This is the text whose contents must be seriously studied and thoroughly grasped by the Buddhists. But the Buddhists of Sri Lanka today, both men and women as well as young and old, are more enchanted with its competitively melodious chanting by various grades of monks. They flock to buy these of their favourite monks in cassette form. They hardly stop, or perhaps never ever, to understand the doctrinal content of this sutta. What a thrill we get in our old age of more than four score years now when these words as the Buddha uttered them find their way into our heads and hearts. With a reliably good teacher, monk or layman, try it out learning the meaning of a few of these phrases. 1. *Etam bhagavatā ... anuttaram dhammacakkaṃ pavattitaṃ appativattiyaṃ samaṇena vā*. 2. *Bhummā devā saddaṃ anussāvesuṃ*. 3. *Atha kho Bhagavā imaṃ udānaṃ udānesi aññāsi vata bho koṇḍañño' ti*.

In a very dramatic episode in this sutta, the entire community of heavenly beings in this cosmos, at all levels, are said to be unanimously declaring that what the Buddha has made known in this sutta ` is not to be challenged '[*appativattiyaṃ*] by any monk or brahmin [*samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā*], any *deva* or *māra* [*devena vā mārena vā*] or not even by the great Brahmā himself or any other [*brahmunā vā kena ci vā lokasmin'ti*]. The truth of what he has said is unquestionable, unassailable, and irreversible. The Pali word used in the sutta is *appativattiyaṃ*. We are sad indeed to say that generation after generation of Sinhala scholarship in Sri Lanka, both monks and laymen have repeatedly blundered on this. This is their learned rendering: ` the Buddha has made a preaching which nobody else could do '[in Sinhala - *no pavatviya haki*]. But our texts say that the Buddha himself requested Venerable Sariputta to carry on and continue doing well what he did: *Evaṃ eva kho tvaṃ Sāriputta mayā anuttaram dhammacakkaṃ pavattitaṃ sammadeva anuppavatteyāsi*. [SN.I.191].

Hardly anybody in this country seems to have the wisdom or the courage to detect this error and correct it. We pray that somebody would be born in this country, in the not too distant future, who would be wise enough to see this blunder and be courageous enough to correct it. The totality of Buddhism is contained within the four noble truths which are enunciated in this sutta. The first truth of *dukkha sacca* courageously explains that the nature of the world being what it is, i.e. being subject to continuous change or *anicca*, the humans living in it suffer infinite discomfort and pain of mind on account of their inability to fall in line with it. That is what constitutes the category of *dukkha* in Buddhism. The cause of this is our inborn craving or *taṇhā* which causes us not to see and makes us refuse to accept as real this continuous process of change. When change ceaselessly takes place, much against our will, there arises the conflict in our not accepting reality of this change or *yathā+bhūta*, and consequently *dukkha* follows. This second stage is presented as the second truth of genesis or *samudaya sacca*. Since this implies a causal arising of *dukkha*, it invariably implies that its cessation is equally well causally generated, i.e. *yaṃ kiñci samudaya-dhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ'ti*.

It must be highlighted here that the Buddha has repeatedly stated that the basic truths of his teachings primarily originate with these two items of *dukkha* [No.1] and *nirodha* [No.3]: *Pubbe cā'haṃ bhikkhave earahi ca dukkhañ ca paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ*. [MN.I. 140]. The other two truths of *samudaya* [No.2] and *magga* [No.4] are no more than the products of the causal analytical probe which the Buddha himself made on the above two. Note *Kimhi nu kho sati jarāmarāṇaṃ hoti kiṃ paccayā jararaṇaṃ 'ti*. This is said of the historical Buddha Gotama at SN.II.10 and of the legendary Buddha Vipassi at Ibid.5.

Here it must also be pointed out that the Buddha's causal analytical approach [what being present: *kimhi nu kho sati* does this arise and what causally: *kiṃ paccayā* brings this about] is specifically applied in relation to the

examination of the **human predicament** of birth, decay and death etc. It applies both to the genesis and the cessation each individual item countenanced, i.e. *uppāda* and *nirodha*. Quite apparently, to nothing outside the problem of man. These *observations* we make here, we consider, are vital to an undistorted understanding of the basic teachings of the Buddha. Be on the look out and be watchful of what you have heard and read.

Let us now get to the subject proper which we announced at the outset, namely On the road to Nirvana - Where do we begin? The presentation by the Buddha of the Four Noble Truths in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta eliminates all doubts in our minds about this. Please, please I request you, get back to our Dhammacakka-ppavattana Sutta. We fully appreciate that nearly every one of you Buddhists invariably is in the glamorous Super Market age. We need to pull you out even for a little while. Please do not forget that as far as the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta goes, sense in the sutta counts much more than its enchanting melodic sound now brought to you.

The moment I utter the word *ariya-sacca*, I know you would burst forth with shouts of *sādhu* and virtually get drowned in it. Resist getting drowned in the tsunami of your own *saddhā*. It is with the higher grade *saddhā* which is confidence born of conviction, and unassailable trust in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha, without going from one *devāle* to another that one is said to cross the vast flood of *saṃsāra* - *Saddhāya tarati oghaṃ*. Awareness, comprehension and conviction must precede emotional sentimentalism in religion. My endeavour is to get you on to dry land from the surging waters gathering around the Buddhists in Sri Lanka. We are nearly losing track of our way to Nirvana.

This is how the Buddha introduces to us his road to Nirvana. I quote to you from the Dhammacakka-ppavattana Sutta. *Idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkha-nirodhagaminī-paṭipadā ariyasaccaṃ. Ayam eva ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*

seyyathīdaṃ sammā diṭṭhi ... [Vin.I.10]. This, O monks is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of dukkha. It is the Noble Eightfold Path, beginning with sammā-diṭṭhi.

We hold the view that this *magga* is an ascending track, leading gradually in successive stages from the down-to-earth *lokiya* or mundane to *lokuttara* or transcendental. We see this departure like the take off of a satellite from the launch-pad at NASA. We take support for our view of successive stages of the Path from the idea of the seven preceding stages leading to the eighth stage of *samādhi* in the Path. They are referred to as *satta samādhi parikkhārā* or the seven accompanying states or pre-requisites leading to *samādhi* [Janavasabha Sutta at DN.II.216]. The verb *pahoti* used here, indicating the relationship of each state to the one following it as in *sammā diṭṭhissa sammā saṅkappo pahoti* means none other than generates or gives rise to. [See also Mahācattārīsaka Sutta at MN. III. 75f.]. The original underlying idea here, we believe, is that every new item of the Path is successive and sequential. Thus we do not subscribe to the view that describes the items of the Path as 'they are comparable to intertwining strands of a single cable'.

The first item of this Path, namely *sammā-diṭṭhi* is always referred to as heralding or leading the way in Buddhist religious culture when it says *sammā-diṭṭhi-pubbaṅgamā* [op.cit.]. *Sammā-diṭṭhi* opens, as it were, the doors of entry to the new creed: *āgato imaṃ saddhammaṃ*. [MN. I. 46]. The sum total of this would be to comprehend the new way of thinking of the creed one chooses to accept [*ujugatā'ssa diṭṭhi*. loc.cit.]. This gives the new convert firmness of belief in the new faith he has chosen: *dhamme aveccappasādena samannāgto*. [loc.cit.]. With the unmistakable reference to *sammā-diṭṭhi* as heralding the journey to Nirvana when it says *sammā-diṭṭhi-pubbaṅgamā*, there is no denying that one begins the journey to Nirvana with *sammā-diṭṭhi*. It opens one's eyes as to what Nirvana is. Nirvana is the total absence of *dukkha*, because in Nirvana all sources of *dukkha* are eliminated.

But with the advance of various branches scientific learning in the world today and their message being brought to our door steps by the multiple media available to us, more and more teachers and preachers of the *dhamma* as well as those who should learn more about their own religious creed, seem to know less and less about Nirvana and its associates. Large numbers of high-ups in our society, particularly our social elite, are hardly worried about a life after death. Their belief in a life after death, if they have any at all, is un-pardonably vague. Rebirth, if you happen to question them, is a doubtful proposition. The primary role of *sammā-dīṭṭhi*, in our opinion, is the correction of these shortfalls. With such vagueness of vision as to what Buddhist aspirations are, nothing but religious or spiritual stagnancy is to be expected in the life of such Buddhists. Buddhists, in course of centuries, have devised ways and means of compensatory ritualistic action to meet the needs of those who are feared not to have obtained the necessary marks for their next life at the time of death. *Dāna* offerings made to the Saṅgha today, most of which have turned out to be in memoriam ones, are intended to serve this purpose.

At this first stage of *sammā-dīṭṭhi* of the Path or the *Ariya Aṭṭhaṅgika Magga*, we believe, what is basically needed is a **correction of vision**, of a non-Buddhist to being a Buddhist. This has to be strictly viewed as a change of standpoint as is clearly implied in the statement *āgato imaṃ saddhammaṃ* which we have quoted above from the Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta. This new vision is said to come through a reliable source, ***parato ghoso***, as the primary condition or *paccaya* for the genesis of *sammā-dīṭṭhi* [See Mahāvedalla Sutta at MN.I.294]. In Buddhist religious culture, the worth of personal initiative and scrutiny as against prayer or grace from an external source is justifiably highlighted by the inclusion of ***yoniso ca manasikāro*** as the second *paccaya* needed for the genesis of *sammā-dīṭṭhi*.

This analysis we make here of *sammā-dīṭṭhi*, and the following study of *sammā-saṅkappa* which follows, should make it clear that the position of *sammā-dīṭṭhi* at the commencement of the Path and its being named as *pubbarigama* or

harbinger specifies its initial and limited role on the path to Nirvana. It is by no means to be equated to *paññā* which as the key to final liberation in Nirvana comes only on the completion of the eight preceding items of the Path from *sammā-ditthi* to *sammā-samādhī*. Note this specific statement which clarifies the precise position of *paññā* in relation to the Path which precedes it and Nirvana which follows it [*sammā-sammādhissa sammā-ñāṇaṃ pahoti sammā-ñāṇassa sammā-vimutti pahoti*. Janavasabha and Mahācattārisaka Suttas quoted above.].

Understanding this precise role which *sammā-ditthi* is seen to be playing in what we believe to be the graduated Path to liberation, we now step into its stage No.2 in *sammā saṅkappa*. This we translate as **correctly re-structured thinking pattern**. A Buddhist has to acquire a mind-set which is acceptable to his creed. The entire body of Buddhist thinking accepts *lobha* [greed] and *dosa* [hatred] as the primary bases of evil [*akusala-mūla*]. Humans are said to be prompted to evil ways of behaviour motivated by these forces of attraction [*lobha*] and repulsion [*dosa*]. A Buddhist has to be conscientiously aware of this and strive for their gradual reduction and total elimination.

In *sammā saṅkappa*, at stage No.2 on the Path, we see this process of taking control of minds at work. It has within it three sub-divisions, namely 1. *nekkhamma saṅkappa*, 2. *avyāpāda saṅkappa* and 3. *avihiṃsā saṅkappa*. Whatever would be the etymological derivation of the word *nekkhamma* in item No.1, we would be very much within its religio-cultural implications if we associate two basic ideas with the word. Primarily it seems to imply a resistance to or negation of whatever that belongs to the realm of *kāma* or sensory gratification [*ni / niṣ + kāma*]. This is unquestionably a major theme in Buddhism which speaks all the time about *kāmānaṃ ādīnavaṃ* and *nekkhamme ānisamsaṃ*. It also could convey the idea of withdrawal, departure or moving away from [deriving from the verb *nikkhamati* as in *ārabhatha nikkhamatha yuñjatha Buddha-sāsane*]. It would be very closely allied to the idea of correcting or counter-acting *lobha* as greed or desire. Note that this is an idea which is now

being very much sponsored by western psychologists as **delay gratification**.

Item No.2 in the mind-correcting process is *avyāpāda-saṅkappa* or **not being hostile** to others in our thinking. As a process of unwholesome thinking, *vyāpāda* falls into the same category as *dosa* referred to above. Closely tied up with this unwholesome mind-set is its being rendered into action in causing injury to others. It is the *saṅkappa* No.3 called *vihiṃsā-saṅkappa*. Whatever the Buddhists in any part of the world think about the Buddhist Eightfold think, we maintain that in it are gradual stages, leading the adherent of Buddhist way of life to higher and higher states of spiritual development. Therefore we consider *sammā diṭṭhi* and *sammā saṅkappa* as items 1 and 2 on the Path to be necessarily basic stages and that, on their own right, they get the way of Buddhist life into action via the *sīla* culture of right word, right deed and right livelihood [*sammā vācā sammā kammano sammā ājīvo*]. It is with these alone that a Buddhist is qualified to proceed on this journey to Nirvana.



Buddhist Ethics of Pañcasīla and their Universal Acclaimability

Professor Dhammavihari Thera

Preliminary observations

This is a study based on the texts and traditions of Theravada Buddhism as a living phenomenon, dating back to more than twenty-five centuries. The contents and the concept of *pañcasīla* or the Buddhist norm of reverence and regard for five societal considerations are indisputably binding on mankind for their successful growth and for the smooth continuance of the human community. They are presented to us in the earliest of the Buddhist teachings as contained in

Pali literature. A careful study of these references clearly indicates that *pañcasīla* occupies a position which could be declared as being 'universally acclaimable.' By using the phrase universally acclaimable, we wish to convey the idea that faithful adherence by everyone, everywhere, east or west, north or south, to these virtues which are upheld by the concept of *pañcasīla*, contributes without exception to the growth and development of mankind, physically, morally and spiritually.

We shall attempt in this essay to clarify how it works, via each individual to the society in which each one lives, and conversely via the society to each individual who constitutes that society. This process of mutual interaction indicates the social and individual dimensions of the benefits that would accrue in consequence of a strict adherence to and a sincere implementation of the principles of *pañcasīla*. It would also be equally clear that this is a law whose operational validity was true of yesterday, is equally true today and shall be so tomorrow. Briefly stated, these considerations are: 1. Respect for all life in every form [*pāṇāpātā veramaṇī*], 2. Respect for the right of others for ownership of their righteously acquired property and possessions [*adinnādānā veramaṇī*] which constitute their source of happiness in life [*tutthijananakam*], 3. Respect for propriety in sex relationships, pre-marital, marital and extra-marital [*kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī*], 4. Respect for honesty of word in speech and in action [*musāvādā veramaṇī*], and 5. personal concern to safeguard one's sanity of judgement by abstaining from the use of drugs and intoxicants [*surāmeraya-majja-pamāda-tṭhānā veramaṇī*].

These virtues which are delivered and placed before the world in their unmistakably specific form by Buddhism over twenty-five centuries ago can be taken out of their Buddhist context without any injury or injustice, and they can be delivered anywhere else, embodying at the same time their essential spirit, and laying the same intended emphasis. They do not claim, as we shall soon discover, and they do not reserve for themselves, any exclusive monopolistic

rights which preclude them from being used by any other.

Pañcasīla and its extra-religious character

Let us first begin with a probe into the extra-religious aspect of the injunctions of the *pañcasīla* which comes to be revealed to us from the Pali Buddhist texts themselves. On a closer and careful examination, we would discover that it is really the outcome of a magnanimous universalization and making available to the world at large of an essential Buddhist theme. In the realm of Buddhist myths and legends, one discovers the widely respected idea of the just world ruler or Universal Monarch, referred to in Pali as ***rājā cakkavatti***. Since he is viewed as the ideal ruler in the world, the Buddhist texts use two adjectives among others to describe him as an upholder of righteousness: *dhammiko* and *dhammarājā* [D.I.86, II.16, III.59]. As a Universal Monarch, he has command over the entire earth, extending up to its four extremities [*cāturanto* and *vijitāvī*. loc. cit.]. Further, as he holds his states with stability and provides adequate security to his people, he is also called *janapadatthāvariya* [loc.cit.]. Even in passing, we should not fail to note here the sensitivity and awareness which Buddhist texts of such an ancient date reflect with regard to these eternal virtues of righteous rulers and successful governments.

Such a ruler gains command over the entire earth in all directions, without the need to shed even a drop of blood. In his conquests, he has no need of arms [*adaṇḍena asatthēna*. loc.cit. i.e. conquering with no force of arms.]. Since his conquest is via righteousness or just means [*dhammena abhivijjya*], his subordinate rulers everywhere submissively seek his counsel, offering themselves up to him and praying for commands and directions [*Ehi kho mahārāja sāgataṃ mahārāja sakaṃ te mahārāja anusāsa ahārājā' ' ti*. D.II.173; III.63]. Such a ruler does not need to be protected in a bullet-proof cover. Even in this what appears to be a mythical or make believe situation, there are a few valuable lessons which the Buddhist texts attempt to teach humanity.

Firstly, there is the situation that legitimate victory or justifiable acquisition of new territories requires willing submission on the part of those who are won over. This is clearly reflected in the attitude of the provincial rulers who come to the Universal Monarch, offering submission and seeking directions. The Monarch on his part, in handling his subordinate rulers, reflects a rare nobility of character in his dignified detachment and absence of greed for new assets or acquisitions. These are the ideals which Buddhism upholds and expects the world at large to strive to live up to.

Political leadership or ruling over others in a state as viewed in Buddhist thinking, much more specifically than anywhere in Indian state-craft, reflects a vast segment of benevolence and love for the subjects over whom a ruler presides. Pali literary sources constantly define the term *rājā* which is the Indian equivalent of the word king, not necessarily etymologically, but in terms of their socio-ethical thinking, as *dhammena pare rañjayatī ' ti kho Vāsetṭha rājā* [D.III.93], i.e. a king is one who righteously delights and gladdens the subjects who are under his care.

Here we are driven to observe that the comment in the Pali English Dictionary [PTS. See under *rājā*] that this is a fanciful etymology is not only quite uncalled for, but is certainly an instance of completely missing the point of the remark in its proper context. The Buddhist lexicographic process is to be understood and appreciated from its own approach. The definition in Buddhist literature, at times, of the word *bhikkhu* as *saṃsāre bhayaṃ ikkhatī ' ti bhikkhu*, i.e. 'one who sees fear and danger in the cyclical process of existence [*saṃsāra*] is a bhikkhu' is a good example of this. Thus in their Buddhist way, having visualised the true role of a king or what true kingship should be, the compilers of Buddhist texts are consistent in their portrayal of the ideal king. And the Cakkavatti or the Universal Monarch was undoubtedly their true model.

Pancasila and its universal relevance

The role of Cakkavatti as Universal Monarch being clearly delineated in

Buddhist texts, we discover that the counsel he offers to the rulers who come to him from all quarters has two major points of interest. Peace and security in the lives of the people and honourable and dignified living in the community is his first major concern. Towards the achievement of this goal he looks up to the moral rectitude of the people of the land, and for this as a means to an end, he sees nothing better than the *pañcasīla* or the observance of the moral injunctions of the five precepts. Each new ruler who comes to him seeking his advice is asked to enforce among his people strict observance of these injunctions. Here one has to take adequate notice of the difference between the *sīla* or precepts as they appear as part of the self-adopted religious observances of Buddhist lay devotees and as they are introduced here, more or less, as state law. As state law under the Cakkavatti's command they read as:

1. No life should be destroyed [*Pāṇo na hantabbo*]
2. None should be robbed or dispossessed of their legitimate possessions [*Adinnaṃ na ādāttaṃ*]
3. No indulgence in improper sex relations [*Kāmesu micchā na caritabbā*]
4. Dishonesty of speech is to be avoided [*Musā na bhaṇitabbā*]
5. No drugs or intoxicants that lead to infatuation or impairment of judgement are to be consumed [*Majjaṃ na pāttaṃ*] D.II.173, III.62

It is as though the enforcement of these injunctions and the maintenance of moral order is part of the duty of sub-rulers and their own states. This is the major component of the Cakkavatti's advice to his subordinates who appear to be, in fact, provincial governors. Their implementation is essentially a part of good governance of a state for which those at the top must hold themselves responsible.

In the second part of his counsel, he gives his provincial rulers complete autonomy in the administration of their political systems as they have hitherto done. Indicating that he has no desire whatsoever for political restructuring for a

federated state, he asks them ` to enjoy their status as they did before ' [*Yathā bhuttañ ca bhujjatha*. *ibid.*]. It is very unfortunate that this vital bit of information enshrined in the Pali text is lost to the English reader, due to a serious inaccuracy of translation. T.W.Rhys Davids, in his translation of the Mahasudassana Sutta of the Digha Nikaya, renders it in 1910 as ' Ye shall eat as ye have eaten ' [Dialogues of the Buddha, Vol.II. 203]. But by 1921, Rhys Davids had doubts about the accuracy of his own translation, and in his translation of the same phrase in the Cakkavattisihanada Sutta, also of the Digha Nikaya, offers a new idea as ' Enjoy your possessions as you have been want to do ' [Dial.III. 64].

We laud this change as a great triumph of a pioneer, reaching nearer to the truth. At the same time we have to lament, and warn our readers that Maurice Walshe, in his translation of the Digha Nikaya in 1987 under the title **Thus Have I Heard**, renders the above phrase in both places as `Be moderate in eating' [Thus Have I Heard by Maurice Walshe, 1987, pp.281,398]. It goes without saying that with the *pañcasīla* ethic which the Universal Monarch wishes to propagate, the reference to the rulers about their eating habits seems to make no sense at all.

It is also to be noted here that no idea of a religious creed, or allegiance to a prophet or messiah whatsoever is introduced at this stage into this organisation of moral and social well-being of the world. Thus we discover here the Buddhist texts introducing the concept of *pañcasīla*, without any sectarian bias, as a medium of social regeneration, revitalisation and sustenance. This idea of the down-to-earth validity of *pañcasīla*, quite apart from the transcendental aspirations, which we are able to point out here from this semi-legendary presentation of the Cakkavatti king in Buddhist texts, is also traceable in the more classical Buddhist texts which deal with the general corpus of basic Buddhist teachings. In a set of two verses belonging to the Malavagga, the Dhammapada [Dhp.v v. 246-7] declares that the failure to safeguard these virtues of the *pañcasīla* would bring about a catastrophic break-up and an utter ruin of an individual's earthly life, here and now, in this very existence.

*Yo pāṇaṃ atipāṭeti musāvādañ ca bhāsati
 loke adinnaṃ ādiyati paradārañ ca gacchati
 surāmerayapānañ ca yo naro anuyuñjati
 idh 'eva eso lokasmiṃ mūlaṃ khaṇati attano*

Dhp. vv.246-7

The stress here is undeniably on the need to safeguard social implications of unethical living. The inclusion of these verses in the Malavagga of the Dhammapada, with an awareness of the corrosion and corruption which any breach of the injunctions of the *pañcasīla* brings about, without looking at them merely in terms of their religious consequences, is also particularly noteworthy. It is equally interesting to discover these same verses being included in another religious text, namely the Anguttara Nikaya [AN.III.205], but with a very crucial addition introduced into it. This portion of the text assesses, in a religious sense, the consequences of violating the *pañcasīla*. Those who breach them are said to suffer in their next life, in a state of degeneracy after death.

*Yo pāṇaṃ atipāṭeti musāvādañ ca bhāsati
 loke adinnaṃ ādiyati paradārañ ca gacchati
 surāmerayapānañ ca yo naro anuyuñjati
 ppahāya pañca verāni dussīlo iti vuccati
 kāyassa bhedaṃ duppañño nirayaṃ so upapajjati.*

AN.III.205

However, we must not fail to add that the text here has not lost sight of the social implications of violating the injunctions of *pañcasīla*. Not only does the word *dussīlo* appearing in these verses above adequately emphasize the loss of virtues of social morality, but also the prose text which accompanies these verses does speak very eloquently about the penalties which a person who violates them has to face in this very life. They are carefully listed as hostility [*veraṃ*] and dread [*bhayaṃ*] which come upon an evil doer in consequence of his

or her misdeeds, as well as mental anguish [*domanassaṃ*] and uneasiness [*dukkhaṃ*] he or she has to suffer [*Yaṃ gahapti pāṇātipātapaccayā diṭṭhadhammikam ' pi bhayaṃ veraṃ pasavati samparāyikm ' pi bhayaṃ veraṃ pasavati cetasikam ' pi dukkhaṃ domanassaṃ paṭisaṃvedeti. Ibid.*].

At this stage, we would do well to trace our steps back into history more than two and a half millennia, to a time well before the appearance of some of the great prophets and messiahs of the world, and seek the company of the Buddha, just yet another mortal who reached the state of transcendence or immortality by his own masterful development of the potential of human wisdom to its highest point of perfection. For the Buddha is primarily the Fully Enlightened One [*Sammāsambuddha*], i.e. one who is fully enlightened both with regard to the real nature of the predicament of the humans in the world in which they live [i.e. *saṃsāra*], and with regard to working out by each one, by his own effort, a solution for their redemption. This is a way of release which each one has to work out by oneself, without supplication and prayer addressed to any redeemer besides oneself. Religious and spiritual power in Theravada Buddhism, as any student of the religion would appreciate, is essentially self-propelled. In the light of Theravada Buddhist teachings, if anything called omnipotence in a religious sense could be conceded, it has to be sought within the human personality itself. It does not exist external to it. This idea is most courageously expressed in the Dhammapada as follows.

Oneself is indeed one's own guide and guardian.
Who else could be one's guide? In the conquest of
oneself, one discovers a guide and guardian
who is most difficult to find.

*Attā hi attano nātho ko hi nātho paro siyā
attanā ' va sudantena nāthaṃ labhati dullabaṃ.*

This is even more emphatically stated as a major axiom of Buddhist teachings [*dhammuddesa*] in the Ratthapala Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya where it says -

The world provides no external refuge
or succour to mankind.
In the world of humans, there is no external power
who guide its destiny.

Attāṇo loko anabhissaro.

MN.II.68

We stress here this basic characteristic of Buddhism, not merely because we wish to appear different from many others, a point which we think certainly needs to be stressed and not be muffled or veiled, but to highlight the emphasis which such an orientation in thinking lays on ethical and moral self-correction which are needed for one's spiritual uplift and social preeminence. For it is this helping hand within oneself which lifts the humans up and lift them out of the mire into which they allow themselves to slip and sink. This is a situation in which humanity is often caught up due to its own lack of resolve and determination on the one hand, and through its own devastating spirit of helplessness and surrender on the other. Let us bring to mind here yet another verse from the Dhammapada which very vigorously stimulates us to battle against this lethargy and meek surrender.

Heedfulness and vigilance leads us to triumph over death,
i.e. enables us to gain spiritual immortality.
Neglect and delay pave the way to death and disaster.
The vigilant and watchful never die.
Those who are heedless are very much like unto the dead.

*Appamādo amatapadaṃ pamādo maccuno padaṃ
appamattā na mīyanti ye pamattā yathā matā.*

Dhp. v. 21

Genesis of Pañcasīla

Grooming ourselves with these preparatory observations relating to personal correction and self-adjustment of men and women, whether young or old, let us now take a closer look at these injunctions of *pañcasīla* as they are laid down in their own Buddhist contexts. We discover one of the finest examples of these in the Saleyyaka Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya [MN.I. 285 ff.]. Here we discover the Buddha in the midst of the residents of the entire village of Sāla. In answer to questions put to him by them with regard to misery and degeneracy to which some humans are seen to be subject, the Buddha makes a very penetrative and exhaustive analysis of evils which beset society, leading its membership to woeful and painful situations in life, with special reference to life after death. In the process, he focuses attention on the conduct of men and women in society which the Buddhist texts refer to as *cariyā* [Skt. *caryā*]. Human conduct, wherever it reflects wildness and viciousness [*adhamma* or unrighteous and *visama* or wild and violent], leads to unhappy results. While the greater part of this sutta deals with matters of primary social relevance such as healthy and harmonious relationships within communities, security and safety of persons and property, good will and cheer, the main concern of the sutta is given as the penalties and punishments which the humans have to suffer in their life after death, for the breaches in conduct which men and women indulge in as they run through their hectic course of life here on earth.

The norms of good conduct laid down in this sutta thus acquire a twofold validity which we could designate as social and religious or mundane and spiritual. The sutta gives us the standard list of ten items [*dasa kammaṃpatha*],

covering the entire range of human action through thought, word and deed, as analyzed and discussed in Buddhist teachings. They are *kusala* or efficient action if they are good and wholesome and *akusala* or unwholesome if they are disruptive and destructive. Speaking in very broad outline, their being good or bad depends on the nature of their impact on the human community, either individually or collectively, contributing to their well-being and happiness or their opposites.

These actions are listed under three categories as bodily, verbal and mental. Details of their classification are as follows.

Bodily: Killing, stealing and adultery

Verbal: Lying, slander, harsh words and frivolous speech

Mental: Covetousness, ill will and perverse views.

The performance of efficient actions or *kusala kamma* implies good living which in turn is also rewarded with a happier life or *sugati* in the birth after death. Their opposites, referred to negatively as *akusala* bring about opposite results of degeneracy, [i.e. of losing the privileged position of being born as humans] and consequently being subject to penitential suffering as would be required in terms of the law of *kamma*. We have already indicated above, quoting the Dhammapada verses 246-7, that the Buddhist teachings are fully alive to the impact of human behaviour, good and bad, on the present life of humans, here and now.

What we would like to stress here, through a study of this sutta, is the Buddhist concern for a total vigil over human action for the weal and welfare of mankind and for the safety and security of life in the world in which they live. Therefore we are right in concluding that it is the regulation of human conduct, and not prayer and supplication to any believed-in higher power above, which Theravada Buddhism upholds as the source of blessings for the world. Like the

ancient reference to 'the writing on the wall' this idea is presented with sufficient assurance as well as an implied note of alarm in the very simple but grandiose Mangala Sutta [Sn.p.46f.] that he who pays heed to the regulative processes and injunctions in society reaches with ease success and serenity everywhere. Among thirty-eight standard items of good personality traits which are presented in this sutta, we find wise choice of associates, avoidance of blamable behaviour, acquisition of learning and skills, respectful inter-personal relationships with parents, wife and children and one's relations as well as personal self-restraint as deserving of special attention. Thus the sutta concludes in this manner.

Those who conform to such norms of conduct shall be triumphant everywhere and suffer no defeat. Everywhere they shall reach success and serenity. This shall be their highest blessing.

*Etādisāni katvāna sabbattha m' aparājitā
sabbattha sotthiṃ gacchanti
taṃ tesaṃ maṅgalam uttamaṃ.*

Sn.p.47. v. 249



Sale, Trade and Export as Aspects of National Economic Development

- A Buddhist Review

Bhikkhu Professor Dhammavihari

Dear Listeners. What should I talk to you about in a sermon. Something that makes you wiser and your life richer by listening to it. I do not propose to take you to Nirvana immediately at the end of this. Much less to heavenly bliss or *dev-*

minis-sepa about which you hear so much, after making food-offerings to monks. I offer nothing about self glorification in *Samāsāra* or grossly materialistic heights you can attain. I wish to talk to you about matters of daily life, here and now. Particularly about how one lives an honourable and decent life as a human. And how you do not get thrown into hell after death. Hence the subject I have chosen above: SALE, TRADE AND EXPORT AS ASPECTS OF NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. Through Buddhist teachings, I wish to enlighten you and your rulers, particularly in this country, on many areas of these.

These concepts of sale, trade and export imply that people, individuals or groups or even a country as a whole, have in excess of their needs many things that they can dispose of to others, near or far, in exchange for monetary returns. These things may include, among others, many items of natural resources like minerals etc., agricultural produce generated by man and manufactured goods of industrial production.

But being Buddhist by our cultural inheritance, the rulers and the ruled in this country need to know and need to remember that whatever we make available, both to man and animal, have to be within the bounds of acceptability on grounds of moral, hygienic and cultural norms. The civilised and cultured people almost everywhere in the world take serious note of this. That is why the export of Marijuana from Marseilles to the U.S.A. came to be resisted. And recently many items of genetically modified [GM] foods were taken off the sales counters of super markets in Thailand. The rulers and administrators in our country need to know these.

Buddhist texts envisage, in their myths and legends, that man even as far back as the food gatherers' age, like old Adam of Biblical origin, was showing signs of becoming more and more corrupt and immoral [*Tesaṃ no pāpakānaññeva akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pātubhāvā ... Aggañña Sutta at DN. III. 91*]. Man was trying to overstep his limits and go beyond bounds of propriety.

This, we call in Buddhism, *dhammaṃ ativattati*. In either case, it was undoubtedly being offensive to men and women with whom humans have to live as comrades.

To food gatherers, self-growing corn is said to have been freely available. But a gradual breakdown in their moral goodness apparently brought about an imbalance and consequent shortage of food. The matter had to be taken up seriously and apportioning of food supplies had necessarily to come about. Buddhist texts show grave concern over this and the corrective steps taken are referred to as 'rationing out the available supply of grain and setting up limits of consumption' [*Yannūna mayaṃ sāliṃ vibhajeyyāma mariyādaṃ thapeyyāma* ' *ti*. DN. III. 92].

It should be noted here that we suspect the translation of this in Rhys Davids' Dialogues of the Buddha [1921], Vol.III. p.87 which runs as 'Come now let us divide off the rice fields and set boundaries there to ' to be somewhat off the mark. We readily admit that this translation of Rhys Davids was a pioneering work. It is more than surprising to find Maurice Walshe, sixty-six years later, making the rendering no better in his translation in Thus Have I Heard-1987, p. 412. This is what he produces: 'So now let us divide up the rice fields with boundaries.' We provide these details here to give our readers an insight into the early Indian concepts of supply and demand, of production and consumption etc. and their gradual maturing up, in course of time, to sound economic principles.

Early Buddhist texts also know a great deal about the growth of communities, urban culture and industrial development. Rulers appear to handle with great success the resources of the land, both human and material, undoubtedly under proper and wise direction of counsellors and directors, This is where **Buddhism promptly steps in to admonish rulers to seek the advice of serious and sincere religious men, and act accordingly in times of political crisis or collapse of governments** [See Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta, DN. III. 61]. Kūṭadanta Sutta of the Digha Nikaya [DN. I.135 f.] reflects great wisdom in this direction.

It shows how the rulers handle the man power resources of the land with great wisdom, without putting square pegs in round holes. Paying due heed to personal skills and aptitude, people are selected for agricultural and pastoral pursuits [*kasi-gorakkhe*], for trade and commercial ventures [*vānijjāya*] as well as for civil and administrative purposes [*rāja-porise*]. An amazingly impregnated Pali word ***ussahati*** which carries with it the meaning of 'ability and willingness to cope with a situation' is used every time when 'competence, aptitude and temperament' is thought of in terms of successful employment.

In this manner, Buddhist texts provide a great deal of useful information relating to the productivity of the land and its people. There are incentives and inducements coming from the state. To those engaged in agriculture, the king or the state is said to provide seed [*bīja*] for sowing and planting material as well as consumer goods for the men who work on the land. This is implied in the word ***bhatta*** which is coupled with the word ***bīja*** [as in *bīja-bhatta* at DN. I. 135] given above. The extent of state patronage of agriculture can be gauged from the Commentarial note on this which speaks of '**repeated offers of seed, consumer goods and even agricultural implements in case of failure or inadequacy**' [*dinne appahonte aññam pi bījañ ca bhattañ ca kasi-paribhaṇḍañ ca sabbaṃ detu*. DA. I. 296]. To those engaged in trade, monetary provision for the purchase of stocks, i.e. goods for sale, is made. Various sectors of employment are correctly assessed and appreciated. These attitudes invariably provided job satisfaction to everyone concerned.

With this kind of set-up and organisational skill in the state, there was undoubtedly vast amounts of produce in the land, both agricultural and industrial, well above local needs. Indeed so, because everybody was happy and willing to work for their country. People's needs by way of food and clothing, and even articles of day to day use were perhaps more than adequately met. In consequence of this, people were happy and joyous [*manussā ca mudā modamānā* DN. I. 135]. State revenue was at a very high level [*mahā ca rañño*

rāsiko bhavissati. Ibid.]. With enough goods to sell, and with enough money in the hands of people to buy, trade with them would have been a very smoothly lubricated social process, with neither the buyer nor the seller having any need to resort to fraud or cunning. Hence no crime, no villainy or restlessness in the land [*Khematthā janapadā akaṇṭakā anupapīlā* - Ibid.], these being invariable rewards for good governing. We believe the above instructions are eternally wise lessons in state craft through which rulers in any part of the world should be put. These, we also believe, are lessons to be learnt via religion. This is why the English educated western world, by no means Sri Lankan, speak with honesty when they speak of RELIGION, THE MISSING DIMENSION OF STATECRAFT. This is the title of a recent publication of the Oxford University Press brought out in 1994.

Thus we see that with wise and benevolent government of a country where the rulers genuinely express a keen desire to make people happy, that being the Buddhist definition of the word *rājā* as 'one who keeps the subjects delighted' [*janam rañjayatī ' ti rājā*], people turn to work and the country invariably becomes productive. Its being productive is qualitatively and quantitatively, both in agriculture and in industry. This is the honest and genuine concept of *samṛddhi*, not just a word on a state name board.

Industry, in the first instance, must be relative to the industrial potential of the land. There must be labour, i.e. man power resources which can justifiably be harnessed, without indiscreetly tearing off the males and the females, the younger and the older from their homes, from their well-established or should be well-established home lives, in the suburban areas, with parents and grand parnets, on the mere offer of fat salary packets.

Evils of these are already evident in the country today as revealed in many recent commission reports about newly set up industrial zones. One must also see to the adequacy of raw material, not forgetting the fate of government established plywood factories etc. and their closure owing to the lack of adequate

supplies of raw material. One must also look into the legitimacy of establishing any industrial plants without serious health hazards to people and any threat to the environment, both physical and cultural.

Produce thereafter moves from hand to hand, in terms of supply and demand, and the process of trade is set in motion. To begin with, what is in excess of need, also begins to find their way out by way of export. This is followed by production for export. **Nobody seems to be worried about as to what is produced and on whose advice and for export where.** These certainly are vital considerations about which the country as a whole should know. In consequence of reliable and regular production of quality goods, new buyers can be sought who pay fair prices with larger margins of profit. In the world of trade today one can sooner or later discover crippling or even death-dealing viruses like preferences, protectionism, embargoes etc. **Officials handling foreign affairs and trade ministries should know best to deal with these.**

Thus it becomes clear that trade which comes in the wake of well organised productivity in the land can become a real determinant of life style of the people. Even if we start with the very early items of human civilisation like agriculture and cattle rearing, there are many illuminating ideas which we can gather from the wisdom of the ancients. Buddhist teachings which relate to successful living in the world into which we are born are full of such instructions. Wealth comes from the energetic and wise application of human resources.

The Pail expression of this idea runs as ***Uṭṭhātā vindate dhanam*** [at Suttanipāta verse 187]: One gathers wealth through energetic striving. 'Care not for heat and cold in the weather pattern any more than you care for a blade of grass' [*Yo ca sītañ ca uṇhañ ca tiṇā bhiiyo na maññati*]. Thus run the Buddhist words of stimulation and inspiration. With this attitude, if one applies oneself to the task like an energetic man, happiness shall never dodge him. Our Buddhist texts say [*Karam purisa-kiccāni so sukhā na vihāyati*. DN.III.185].

As means of making a living, agriculture and cattle-rearing seem to take precedence over industry. Science and technology which are much needed in industry come on the scene of human development very much later. Agriculture, we believe, in its very pursuit gets man nearer to nature and watches, as it were, the growth of man, with nature in close proximity. This is a healthy aspect in life to look out for. The cutting down of the wet forests of South America to make grasslands for cattle-rearing in the interests of meat processors and beef eaters is looked upon today as a contradiction and a glaring mistake. In Sri Lanka, clearing the hill tops of central highlands to find room for tea plantations does not appear to be any different in its stupidity. It only serves the interests of powerful blocks of egotistic gold-seekers.

Before big money is sought for smaller blocks of power wielders, the larger areas of the commoner of the land must be looked into. Thus should the generosity and magnanimity of the state be manifested. The basic food supplies of the bulk of the country, and not the import of luxury items like ham and bacon, must be the urgent priority. Better the possibility of getting these out of our own land, happier and more secure would everybody be. As items of food supply for the majority and our masses, the freshness and wholesomeness of what is grown in our own country must be better guaranteed. Home-grown *mung* dhal, i.e. *mun aṭa* should replace imported Mussore dhal. So should our sweet potatoes or *batala*, with many competitively rich varieties of red-skins, whites and yellows sweep the board and send imported varieties of potatoes underground. But many Sri Lankan housewives would weep and wipe a tear off their faces if imported dhal and potatoes were not on their daily menu or were not available for purchase at their CWE and the Super markets, or even at black market prices. They would find it difficult to thicken their soups without imported dhal, not knowing what miracles others do with things like cob corn or *baḍa iringu*.

What about the dozens of varieties of yams or tubers [*Vel ala* and *Jāvā ala* etc], white and purple, both aerial and underground, which grow on the creepers

in the country side? They would make lovely trailers even on mango trees in the city gardens, with bunches of delightful aerial tubers, outdoing in beauty the grape wines. Mature ones of these aerial tubers, when boiled and peeled, would beat in shape and colour a plateful of larger-sized strawberries. The test of them is in the eating. These miracle food providers only need for their growing pits of about three feet by three feet by three feet, filled with soft peaty soil, produced in compost pits with your own garden leaves. Thanks to nature, the sun and rain would look after them, even without having to chant for their growth, saying *Devo vassatu kālena sassa-sampatti hotu ca*.

These yams and tubers, we have eaten with relish, more than sixty, seventy years ago, as children of six and seven, often sharing them with our neighbours in the village, as we dug them out of the ground with our grand parents. Ask us and we shall tell you more about them. Some of these, we would say are good enough for export to any part of the world. We have seen enough of these imported to Canada, during a not very long stay in Toronto, from the West Indies Islands. Why not plan for their production and export, if lotus roots and canned Coconut water from Thailand can be had in Australia and Tapioca yams from West Indies can be purchased in many Canadian cities?

Finally, talking in terms of sales, trade and exports, let us turn to a few pages of Buddhist thinking on this subject. The Buddha or his teachings, we are glad to note, has thought it fit to pass down to posterity a few instructions, a few guidelines regarding the propriety of trading in certain commodities. With the interests of humanity at heart, Buddhist thinking considers it necessary to pronounce judgement with regard to the permissibility of sale, within the human community, of certain commodities. In this business of sale and trade or *vanijjā* as they call it in our Buddhist texts [or *velandāma* in Sinhala], they have unequivocally placed a ban on the sale of five commodities. [See Anguttara Nikaya III. 208. *Pañca imā bhikkhave vanijjā upāsakena akaraṇīyā: sattha, satta, maṃsa, majja, visa*]. They are 1. *sattha* or weapons of destruction and

armaments, 2. *satta* or living beings which is specifically taken here as ' sale of humans as slaves ' [*manussa-vikkayo* at AA. III. 303], *maṃsa* or flesh of animals [i.e. of fish, bird or beast. But the Commentary explains it as ' sale of animals reared for meat ': *sūkara-migādayo poṣetvā tesam vikkayo*. Ibid.], 4. *majja* or drugs and intoxicants and 5. *visa* or poison. The sale of these above listed items, it is enjoined, neither should one do, nor get others to do [*Iti sabbam ' pi imaṃ vanijjaṃ neva attanā na pare samādapetvā kāretuṃ vaṭṭati*. Ibid.]

What a wisdom-packed vision of the world, reflected more than two and a half millennia ago. This is well before the development of science and technology which undeniably brought us to the forefront of deadly weaponry of war, causing limitless death and destruction as in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, not to speak of the carnage in the battle fields of Europe during the World War II and elsewhere. Whether in the battle field or in the domestic front, weapons are, by their very name, tools of destruction. Whether a woman carries a revolver, even a small sized one, in her hand bag to defend herself against her husband or her boy friend, as publicly declared by high-ranking women from the most civilised parts of the world, guns and knives which come under the category of *satta* are killer weapons. They are not to be made freely available through sale, neither to the adult nor the juveniles. They come therefore under forbidden articles of trade. With the development of scientific research and modern technology, more articles like plastic explosives of the suicide bombers probably have to be added to the list. The world of today knows of the menace of illicit sale of weapons of war, both openly and under cover.

The world knows enough of the history of the slave trade and about its worse who even in India. But even today the world witnesses a considerable amount of exploitation of labour, specially of children, females and the under privileged. They would all come under the trading and trafficking in humans. Buddhist thinking totally denounces it. Respectful and conscientious employment of females and younger ones is dealt with separately [See DN. III.191:

yathābalaṃ kammanta-saṃivīdhāneṇa]. As for trading in meat or animals for meat production, we would assume the very first precept of the *pañca-sīla* would impose a ban on this. How can a Buddhist country like Sri Lanka, with a near seventy per cent of its population being Buddhist by religion, even at the level of rumour, be suspected of exporting meat to the world outside? In civilised states of democracy, at least in the east, there can be no secret pacts on these. People have a right to know as to what is going on in their name. Democracy is necessarily a form of government of the people.

Sale of drugs and alcohol is now going overboard everywhere. Marseilles produces marijuana and the United States of America kept on purchasing it from them for home consumption. One kept on saying ' We buy it because you produce it '. And the other, equally vociferously replied saying ' We produce it because you continue buying it from us '. After much wrangling, when Marseilles ceased to be the exporter, Mexico gleefully stepped in to be the honourable supplier. In the sector of alcohol, Sri Lanka's domestic sales as well as export to the world outside, both necessarily come within this fourth item of forbidden commodities of sale. Buddhism or no Buddhism, the world knows of the menace of alcohol, both at domestic and at high elite social level. But fortunately or otherwise, we have built it, government after government, and mind you governments of people's choice, to be the bed rock of our national economy.

As for the final one of sale of poison, we Sri Lankans need some high-powered magnifying glasses to be really sensitive about this. Most of us in this country live without seeing and knowing what is happening around us. In our sale of foods and some of our local medical products, we are not totally assured of their non-toxic quality. With us, the Bureau of Sri Lankan Standards [SLS] is one of fairly recent origin. We can therefore be selling out a good many items of harmful food and drink to our people, particularly to our children.

This subject of forbidden commodities of sale is today one of international

importance. In the interests of physical health and moral well being of our unborn generations, let us give serious thought to this. We hope that moment will not be a day too late.

